



BATTLE OF HOMESTEAD AND CARRIE FURNACES 6 AND 7

Special Resource Study

Environmental Assessment

DRAFT - September 2002



This report has been prepared to provide Congress and the public with information about the resources in the study area and how they relate to criteria for inclusion within the national park system and for the feasibility of a national park unit. Publication and transmittal of this report should not be considered an endorsement of a commitment by the National Park Service to seek or support specific legislative authorization for the project or appropriation for its implementation. Authorization and funding for any new commitments by the National Park Service will have to be considered in light of competing priorities for existing units of the national park system and other programs.

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Summary

Congress requested this Special Resource Study on the Battle of Homestead and Carrie Furnaces 6 and 7 as part of the Department of the Interior Appropriations Act for FY 1999. The purpose of this study is to determine whether resources associated with the former Homestead Works, including the Battle of Homestead Landing site and Carrie Furnaces 6 and 7, meet established NPS criteria for national significance, suitability and feasibility for inclusion in the National Park System.

When considering national significance, the site of the former Homestead Works is best remembered for two important occurrences in the nation's history:

- Homestead was the site of one of America's greatest and most far-reaching labor wars, the "Battle of Homestead" in 1892, and related developments during the nearly 50 years on the non-union period in the steel industry.
- The operation of the integrated plant was pivotal in the development of the American iron and steel industry during the 1892 to 1951 period, helped to identify Pittsburgh as the capital of "Big Steel" and influenced steel making throughout the country.

The heart of the steel manufacturing plant has been demolished, diminishing the historic integrity and context of this community. The Bost Building, a National Historic Landmark is of national significance and meets the significance criteria for inclusion in the National Park System. The remaining resources associated with the former Homestead Works do not fully meet the significance criteria for designation as a unit of the National Park System. When considered as an ensemble, however, this collection of distinct resources – including the NHL Bost Building, Carrie Furnaces 6 and 7, the Battle of Homestead Landing site and the Homestead National Historic District – have the potential to offer superlative opportunities for public education and appreciation of this labor and steel worker history and retain individual site integrity commensurate with the ever-changing nature of the industry.

Based on review of existing NPS and other historic sites and other research, this study concludes that there is an outstanding opportunity to tell the important story of labor organizations and protests within the context of the steel industry and related communities' resources. While other furnace complexes and related iron and steel industry resources are available and interpreted in Pennsylvania and elsewhere, this site offers a prime ensemble of resources to interpret the intertwined and nationally significant story of labor and its relationship to the "Big Steel" era and community. The finding of this study is that the Bost Building is suitable for inclusion in the National Park System.

The study found that the resources in the Homestead vicinity are individually important and that the resources as a group have considerable interpretive value. The configuration and condition of the multiple resources in the Homestead vicinity — scattered sites in varying states of repair, uncertainty regarding the protection of the resource setting over time, and significant improvement and operations cost exposure — lead this study to conclude that NPS ownership and management of these individual or collective resources is not feasible nor is direct NPS management required, inasmuch as some of the resources, such as Carrie Furnaces 6 and 7 would be extremely difficult and costly to manage while others already are managed by other private, public or nonprofit entities.

Since the Bost Building is owned and operated by a nonprofit organization, the study concludes that establishment of a federally owned and operated NPS unit at the Bost Building is not necessary since the nonprofit organization is adequately operating and maintaining the building at present. However, the value of the resources and the importance of the themes they convey raises the possibility that other management alternatives should be considered that do not rely on NPS ownership of land or buildings but have some other level of participation of the NPS.

Three alternatives are presented for consideration and comparison:

- **Alternative 1: Continued Support to Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area** – The Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area management entity, the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation (SIHC), would

continue to be the primary entity responsible for preservation and interpretation of the resources in the Homestead vicinity, as part of its general mission to conserve, promote and manage the historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of steel and related industries in southwestern Pennsylvania and to develop uses for these resources so they may contribute to economic revitalization of the region. NPS would continue its current support to the SIHC, who would continue its endeavors to implement the Management Action Plan for the NHA. No additional federal action would be proposed.

- **Alternative 2: The Homestead Steel Workers National Historic Site** – The focus of Alternative 2 would be the stories of steel workers, their communities and their dramatic struggle with powerful steel companies to secure decent working conditions and fair wages, including a nearly 50-year struggle to rebuild a union after it was broken by the Battle of Homestead. Congress would designate a National Historic Site as an affiliated area of the National Park System to authorize the NPS to provide financial, interpretation and preservation assistance to local public and private entities beyond that provided in existing authorities. NPS assistance would be directed toward key resources in the vicinity of the former Homestead Works and its community that illustrate these themes. The boundary of the NHS would include certain noncontiguous historic sites in Homestead, West Homestead, Munhall, Swissvale and Rankin, Pennsylvania.
- **Alternative 3: Lower Mon Valley Steel National Historic Site** – Alternative 3 would focus on the stories of steel workers, their communities and their dramatic labor struggles – told in the Homestead vicinity. It would place the unique labor story of Homestead in a larger context by expanding interpretation to encompass the historic industrial sites and related resources that line the Lower Mon Valley to convey the massive scale of the “big steel” industry that employed hundreds of thousands of workers, built mammoth plants that indelibly imprinted the form and culture of its river landscape, and produced basic materials that changed the lifestyles of a nation. Congress would designate a National Historic Site as an affiliated area of the National Park System to authorize the NPS to provide technical and financial assistance to local public and private entities for interpretation and preservation of resources beyond that provided by existing authorities. The boundary of the NHS would include the same sites as Alternative 2, which would be eligible for interpretation and preservation assistance, supplemented by a corridor of varying width on both sides of the Lower Mon River between the Youghiogheny River and the confluence of the Mon with the Allegheny River. Along this river corridor, where limited NPS interpretive assistance would be available to link resources in the Homestead vicinity to other steel industry related resources, the scope and power of the “Big Steel” story can be appreciated by the public.

Based on comparison of the above alternatives, the study finds that the resources in Homestead warrant consideration of some federal involvement, as they have the potential to convey the nationally significant labor story of Homestead and its workers, offering a group of individual sites that represent places significant to the labor movement as well as venues representative of work and community life in the “Big Steel” era. The study finds that the establishment of a National Historic Site as an affiliated area of the National Park System, without NPS ownership or management of property, but with NPS technical and financial assistance is appropriate. This federal recognition and involvement could be a catalyst for greater local commitments and initiatives, and could greatly enhance broader public understanding, use and interest in the role of labor and workers in the “Big Steel” era.